



U.S. Air Force Veteran Terry McKay of Chicago, Ill., researches the value of donations at a Waukegan, Ill., thrift store. McKay and four other Veterans from the North Chicago VA Medical Center are employed at the Veteran-run store. (Photo by Jonathan Friedman)

North Chicago VA Veterans operate Veterans thrift store in Illinois

Veterans find passion in running a store to help other Veterans

By Jonathan Friedman
NCVAMC Public Affairs

Julie LoCoco of Lake Forest, Ill., summarizes her purpose for opening businesses rather simply: “We’re all about the Veterans here, and I can’t think of a better way to show our appreciation for their service.”

LoCoco, who is the director of the non-profit organization U.S. Veterans Industries, took her passion for helping Veterans and turned it into a small Waukegan, Ill., thrift store called “Route 66.”

Aside from LoCoco, the store is completely run by Veterans, including homeless Veterans. In fact, LoCoco explained that the store received its name from the Veterans living in the Homeless Domiciliary at the North Chicago VA Medical Center, which happens to be Bldg. 66.

“This store is truly a Godsend for me at this point in my life,” said U.S. Air Force Veteran Terry McKay of Chicago, Ill. “I mean, I’m 68 years old and there are no jobs to be had by anyone out there. Where else would I get a job at this point? This place is a chance for me to help other Vets, and it’s a great job.”

McKay and four other Veterans help set up the store with donations from the community. LoCoco explained that any profits made at the location are being used to open future Veteran-run stores.

“When we were in the military, we were always watching each other’s backs,” said U.S. Army Veteran Shawn Crown of Northbrook, Ill. “Now that we’re out, it hasn’t changed. This is Vets

(Continued on page 3)

DoD, Navy and VA Secretaries sign Lovell FHCC Executive Agreement

By Jonathan Friedman
NCVAMC Public Affairs

When the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010 was signed by President Obama Oct. 28, 2009, the law authorized the nation’s first Veterans Affairs/Department of Defense integration between the North Chicago VA Medical Center and the Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes.

The law required the leadership of the new federal health care center to have a signed Executive Agreement by the Secretaries of the Department of Defense, U.S. Navy and Veterans Affairs, outlining specific portions of the integration. The Executive Agreement was signed April 23 by all three Secretaries.

“The Executive Agreement outlines some very important parts of the law within the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010, including the transfer of DoD civilian personnel and how we will operate with a single-governance structure and a combined budget,” said Patrick Sullivan, North Chicago VA Medical Center Director.

The 33-page agreement is outlined in nine areas: governance, patient priority categories, budgeting, staffing and training, construction, physical plant management, contingency planning, quality assurance and information technology.

“Although we had half a year to get the agreement signed, it really represents a culmination of years of hard work from our integrated team,” said Kelvin Parks, VA/DoD Integration Team Member. “We’ve been collaborating on this both locally and nationally for quite some time, and having it signed now is truly a huge step towards the success of our integration.”

In This Issue...



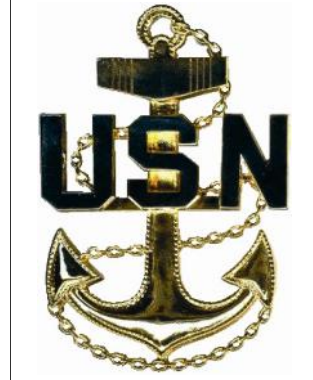
NASA Astronaut, Surgeon speaks to staff and students

Pg. 2



NCVAMC Volunteers honored at annual celebration

Pg. 4



NHCGL Chief Petty Officers Celebrate 117th B-Day

Pg. 3

Leadership Commentary

Planning for success begins long before formal documents

The Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center will thrive because of detailed, meticulous planning



Patrick L. Sullivan,
North Chicago VAMC Director

With fewer than 150 days until we stand up the nation's first federal health care center, we are in the final push, accomplishing great achievements under tight constraints. Our integrated teams

continue to prove that they can produce phenomenal results under high-pressure time constraints.

“Make no mistake that change is often challenging -- but it is also an opportunity to shine.”

- Patrick L. Sullivan

This was particularly true with the recent signing of our Executive Agreement, a document that elaborates portions of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010 and explains the details of how we will operate as an integrated establishment.

The signing of the Executive Agreement was a huge achievement that certainly solidified our path to becoming fully integrated. More so, I also see this signing as an example of our planning for success.

While the document covers many details, including personnel

changes, priority of care, co-payment options, etc., it does not capture how long we have been planning for a successful operation.

We have had integrated teams working countless hours on details ranging from priority of care to cultural changes. Make no mistake that change is often challenging -- but it is also an opportunity to shine. It is an opportunity for us to bring our two organizations together and provide the best healthcare to our patients.

Will we find areas for improvement? Absolutely. We will

grow and learn from the first day of our integration. But because of our meticulous planning, our success as the nation's first federal health care center will soon be apparent to every patient we see.

Thank you so much for remaining focused on our goal of patient-centered care. Together, we will prove that our promise to ready warriors and care for heroes is much more than a phrase or a string of words. It will be our reason for planning.



NASA Astronaut, Surgeon speaks to staff and students at Rosalind Franklin University

Astronaut Dr. Robert Satcher shares life, professional experiences with audience

By Jonathan Friedman
NCVAMC Public Affairs

Orthopedic Surgeon and NASA Astronaut Dr. Robert L. Satcher, Jr. spoke to staff and students from the North Chicago VA Medical Center, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, and Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes April 14 about his unique journey as a medical professional and NASA astronaut.

Satcher's presentation, "If You Cannot Fall, How Can You Get Hurt? An Orthopedic Surgeon's View from Space on Musculoskeletal Health," examined how his medical training and background prepared him for space flight.

The event was sponsored by the North Chicago VA Medical Center, hosted by the Rosalind Franklin School of Medicine and Science, and developed in conjunction with the Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes.

Satcher's multimedia presentation included video and photographs of his training and mission aboard the International Space Station.

Satcher was a member of the STS-129 mission (Nov. 16-29, 2009), which was the 31st shuttle flight to



Orthopedic Surgeon and NASA Astronaut Dr. Robert L. Satcher, Jr. (far left) greets staff from the North Chicago VA Medical Center, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, and Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes April 14 following his presentation to the group. (Photo by Sandra Mesrine, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science)

the International Space Station. He was selected by NASA in May 2004 and completed Astronaut Candidate Training in 2006. Satcher completed his first flight on STS-129 in November 2009 and has logged over 259 hours in space, including 12 hours and 19 minutes in two Extravehicular Activity space walks. His biography can be found at <http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/Bios/htmlbios/satcher-rl.html>.



Audience members from the North Chicago VA Medical Center, Rosalind Franklin School of Medicine and Naval Station Great Lakes react to the presentation from Orthopedic Surgeon and NASA Astronaut Dr. Robert L. Satcher, Jr., April 14. (Photo by Sandra Mesrine, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science)

The Apollo

North Chicago VA Medical Center
Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes

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3001 Green Bay Rd.
North Chicago, Illinois 60064
224-610-3714
northchicago.va.gov/about/fhcc.asp



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Medical Center Director
North Chicago VA Medical Center
Patrick L. Sullivan

Commanding Officer, Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes
CAPT Thomas E. McGue

Chief of Communications
Mary Schindler

Public Affairs Officer
Jonathan E. Friedman

Public Affairs Officer
Teresa Hawkins

Layout and Copy Editor
Mary Waterman

Submissions to the publication can be emailed to vhanch.media@va.gov

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Get to know...

The Research Compliance Office

Behind-the-scenes programs ensure research compliance and education

By Jonathan Friedman
NCVAMC Public Affairs

Medical research compliance can often be a complicated and challenging area of any medical facility, but it can also be very rewarding. The North Chicago VA Medical Center conducts research in areas from psychology to cardiology and is committed to the integrity of research programs and the well-being and safety of every patient.

"Most people don't really consider research compliance when they think of a standard medical center," said Brandon Burton, North Chicago VA Medical Center Research Compliance Officer. "It's not direct patient care or wellness, but it's often a vital part of the care behind the scenes."

With the integration of the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center Oct. 1, the shared mission of the health care center will mean consolidating the vital function of research compliance.

"Compliance with the myriad of federal, state and organizational policies can be challenging," said CAPT Kenneth Sapp, Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes Clinical Investigation and Research Department. "By doing so, however, we are able to ensure that research participants are protected and that research is conducted ethically."

Burton explained that research compliance has two primary areas: auditing and education. Both are equally important and serve an important role in the care of patients.

"While auditing is always an after-the-fact procedure that ensures all the proper regulations and paperwork have been filed, I know this isn't the most exciting portion of medical care. It's really a vital part of recognizing any patterns of error or simple trends, which I can then use to create educational classes," said Burton.

Sapp explained that the education portion of research compliance is also important to the readiness mission of the military.

"Proper education and training of investigators and research staff is critical," said Sapp. "By carefully conducting research, we are able to mitigate any potentially harmful situations and can maintain our mission readiness."

While often behind the scenes, both Burton and Sapp agree that the research compliance officers quietly ensure patients are cared for in the safest and most efficient manner.

Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes Chief Petty Officers celebrate 117th B-Day

As leaders of enlisted personnel, CPOs exemplify leadership, experience



Chief Petty Officers from the Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes celebrated their 117th birthday April 1. The word "Chief" means taking first place, and denotes its senior position among enlisted ranks. Since their inception, Chief Petty Officers have made their impression on the Navy, and they are looked to as the definitive leaders of enlisted personnel. (Photo by Teresa Hawkins, NHCGL Public Affairs)

Veteran-run thrift store in Waukegan

(Continued from page 1)
helping other Vets."

LoCoco got the idea of the store while she was living in Virginia and noticed the large number of homeless Veterans living outside of her home.

"I wanted to do something that would make a difference," said LoCoco. "What I learned later was that the Veteran homelessness was not due to a lack of housing, but more a lack of jobs."

U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Jim Zbonski of Chicago, Ill., agreed with LoCoco's statement and made it clear that he was there for the long haul. "This is my opportunity for a second chance. They came to us with this idea, and I'm just not quitting," said Zbonski. "For me, I love the idea of getting an honorable discharge one more time."



Julie LoCoco of Lake Forest, Ill., sorts inventory at her Veteran-run thrift store in Waukegan, Ill. LoCoco hired Veterans to operate the store that has a single purpose of helping Veterans in the community. (Photo by Jonathan Friedman)

**Editor's note: Any implied endorsement in this article is unintentional.*

VA staff member selected for award



Barbara Thomas (center), North Chicago VA Medical Center Domiciliary Technician, was recently recognized and awarded a Civic Leadership Award as one of the 2010 Most Influential African Americans in Lake County, Ill. (Courtesy photo)



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Volunteers honored for 57K+ hours

Nearly 300 volunteers recognized April 29 at awards luncheon

By **Kenny List**
NCVAMC Communications



(From right) Volunteer Richard Kutz of McHenry, Ill., receives a 20,000-hour outstanding service tray from Patrick L. Sullivan, North Chicago VA Medical Center Director Apr. 29. More than 300 volunteers attended the 2010 Annual Volunteer Awards Program in Grayslake, Ill. (Photo by Jonathan Friedman)

Volunteers were honored at the North Chicago VA Medical Center the week of April 8 as part of National Volunteer Week. Volunteers were thanked for their vital service to the patients and recognized at an award ceremony Apr. 29.

Richard Kutz, of McHenry, Ill., received the 20,000-hour outstanding service tray.

“I started out as a service officer with the Veterans of Foreign Wars,” said Kutz, who has been volunteering at the North Chicago VA Medical Center since 1987. “I’ve continued volunteering for all these years so I can help Veterans in any possible way.”

More than 300 volunteers attended the 2010 Annual Volunteer Awards Program in Grayslake, Ill., which took on a casino theme, complete with mock game play, the music of Frank Sinatra and a variety of foods.

Other prestigious VA Voluntary Services award recipients include Floyd Eubanks of Waukegan, Ill. (17,500-hour outstanding service plate); Michael Hiley of Zion, Ill. (15,000-hour outstanding service medallion); Alvie Green of Wildwood, Ill. (7,500-hour plaque); and Elizabeth Korbai of Waukegan, Ill. (7,500-hour plaque).

“After becoming disabled from my job, I wanted to do something that helped Vets and kept my mind occupied at the same time,” said Green, who is a Mason and has been volunteering at the North Chicago VA Medical Center since 1989. “At the end of the day, if I can just help someone, it makes me feel much better.”

All volunteers were honored at the event, and additional awards ranged from 6,500-hours to 50-hours. In total, North Chicago VA Medical Center volunteers contributed more than 57,000 hours in 2009, and according to national volunteer statistics, these hours would equate to more than \$1.1 million in paid services.

Those interested in volunteering with the North Chicago VA Medical Center should contact 224-610-3714.



James Miller, North Chicago VA Medical Center ER Nurse Manager, conducts a tour with the Industrial College of the Armed Forces April 7. The Health Administration students were in North Chicago to gain a better understanding of the integration efforts of the future Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center. (Photo by Teresa Hawkins)



Got a Minute?



[YouTube.com/LovellFHCC](https://www.youtube.com/LovellFHCC)

Father-daughter Veteran team find comfort in one another

North Chicago VAMC Transition Patient Advocate assists Veteran team with their unique healthcare requests

By **Yanitz Irizarry**
NCVAMC Communications Volunteer

U.S. Army Veteran Eduardo Torrez Lopez and his daughter, U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Arlene Walsh, share a common bond. As father and daughter, this bond is often assumed. However, as soldiers, the bond is only strengthened as they both support one another through their physical therapy at the North Chicago VA Medical Center.

“He often says, ‘She is my right hand,’” said Walsh about how her father refers to her. “That’s what my dad always calls me, and he’s mine.”

Lopez began his military service with the Puerto Rican National Guard in the communications field and was the first in his family to serve in the U.S. military. While serving, he developed some service-connected injuries. While he has been seen at many medical centers for his rehabilitation, Lopez had very clear feelings about his medical care at the North Chicago VA Medical Center.

“They’re doing an amazing job at the North Chicago VA,” said Lopez during his physical therapy session. “They treat me so great, and are healing my daughter and I together.”

Similar to her father, Walsh was the first female to come back from a deployment in her family.

She was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and returned home October 2008. Like Lopez, she too developed service-connected injuries while deployed.

In the beginning, Walsh explained that she was frustrated with the system, and then she was connected with an OEF/OIF Transition Patient Advocate.

“I really felt like I kept running into red tape,” said Walsh of the initial military process. “Then I met this Angel in the OEF/OIF transition office: Miss DeMario. She led me to the right people so I could get the help I needed, and I can’t thank her enough.”

Darlene DeMario, North Chicago VA Medical Center OEF/OIF Transition Patient Advocate, had similar notions of Walsh, and was impressed by her drive to get the help she deserved.

“When I first met Ms. Walsh, she was limping and clearly frustrated,” said DeMario. “I was so impressed with her motivation to get help, that it really wasn’t difficult to assist her. I knew that anything I set up for her would be accomplished. It’s really an honor to serve Veterans like her.”

After months of rehabilitation, both Walsh and Lopez are feeling much better. Walsh sees the process as simple. “I’m a staff sergeant in the military; I have to lead by example,” she said.



(From left) U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Arlene Walsh assists her father, U.S. Army Veteran Eduardo Torrez Lopez, with his physical therapy appointment at the North Chicago VA Medical Center. Walsh and Lopez share a unique bond as family and soldiers. (Photo by Jonathan Friedman)

“So if I’m broke, I need to make myself better so I can lead again.”

Although clearly a strong leader, Walsh also admits that her father remains her “go-to person” for inspiration and values: “My dad always tells me, ‘live each day of your life as if it were your last.’ And I live by those rules.”